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July 2016 Japan's No.1 English Magazine
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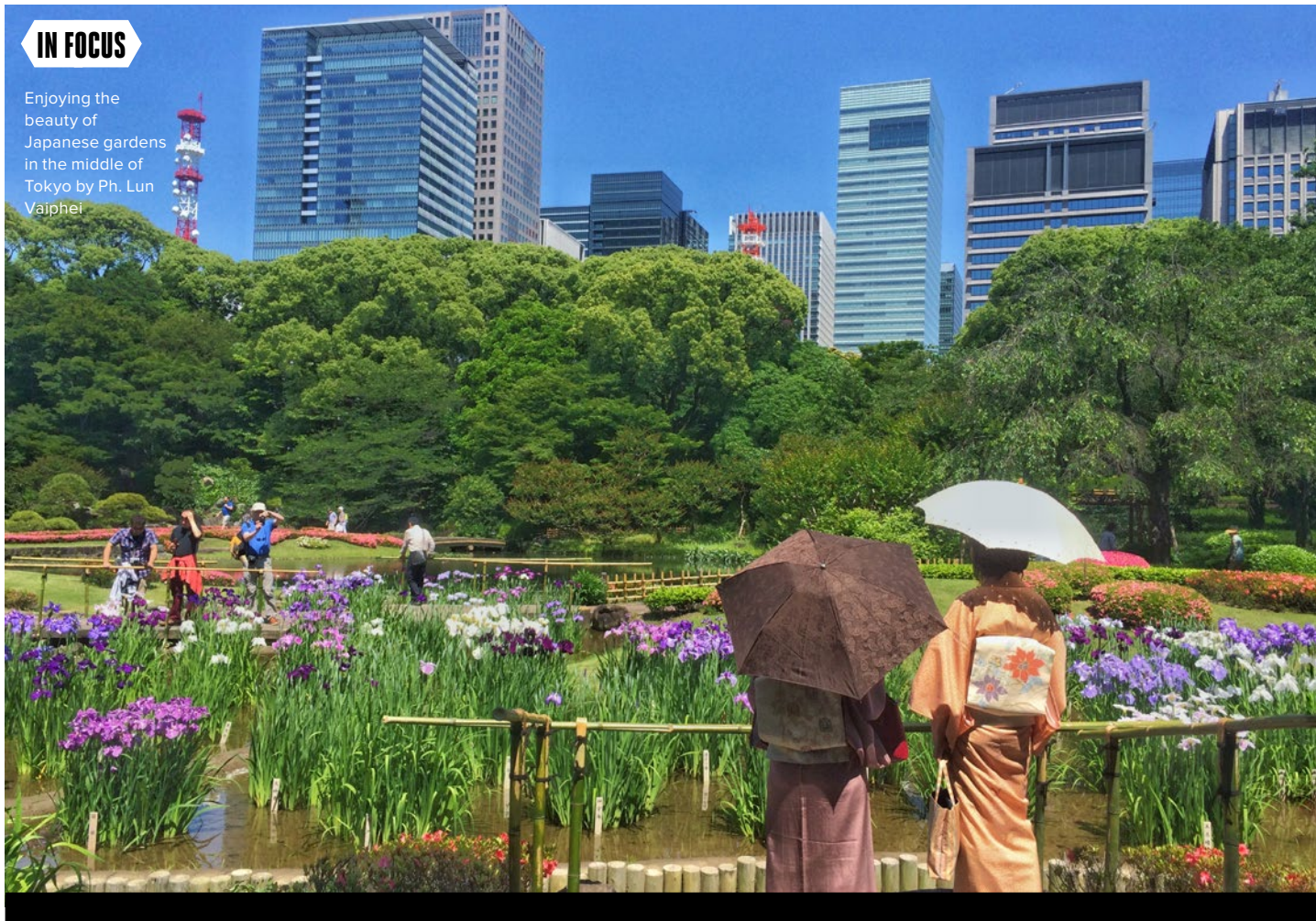


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Enjoying the beauty of Japanese gardens in the middle of Tokyo by Ph. Lun Vaiphei



JULY 2016

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Photo: Nobuyoshi Araki



Photo by Akira Shibata



風の谷のナウシカ 1984 Studio Ghibli・H

JULY 1-3 DAIRAKUDAKAN "PARADISE"

Though dancer/actor/choreographer Akaji Maro is best-known to the wider public from his performance as Boss Ozawa in *Kill Bill*, his most profound contribution has been as leader of butoh troupe Dairakudakan ("Great Camel Battleship"). Maro formed the troupe in 1972 after coming under the influence of butoh pioneer Tatsumi Hijikata in the '60s. Bringing spectacular, theatrical, and sometimes shocking techniques into butoh pieces, the company has, along with Sankai Juku, been one of the international ambassadors for Japan's most controversial cultural export. The upcoming debut of "Paradise" will feature music by Detroit techno pioneer Jeff Mills and domestic composer Keisuke Doi. Dairakudakan's dancers comprise the elite of butoh and will offer a feast for the senses as they tense their lean muscles into the expressive contortions typical of butoh. **Jun 30-Jul 3. Setagaya Public Theater. 4-1-1 Taishido, Setagaya. Tickets, ¥3,000-5,000. ☎ Sangenchaya. Tel: 0422-21-4984. <http://setagaya-pt.jp>** *Dan Grunebaum*

JUL 2 SHONEN KNIFE

Marking their 35th anniversary this year, the female pop-punk trio from Osaka developed a cult following in the '80s and '90s with their underground, alternative sound and have played a key role in Japan's alt-rock scene ever since. Influenced by the punk-rock/new-wave movement of the 1970s, Shonen Knife sprang into international favor when they toured with popular international alternative acts like Sonic Youth and Nirvana—Kurt Cobain reportedly being a huge admirer of the group. In recent years, the girls have paid tribute to their major musical influence, The Ramones, releasing a 2011 cover album, *Osaka Ramones*. They released their 20th studio album this year, which saw the debut of the band's new drummer Risa—coincidentally also 20—who joined the group after Emi Morimoto separated from the band in 2015. **July 2, 6pm. Shindaita Fever, 1-1-14 Hanegi, Setagaya-ku. ¥3,500. Tel: 03-3444-6751. ☎ Shindaita**

JUL 7-SEP 11 STUDIO GHIBLI EXHIBITION

When it comes to Japanese cinema, few would disagree that the anime powerhouse Studio Ghibli is anything short of exceptional. Started in 1985 by a group of directors and producers, including the legendary Hayao Miyazaki, following the success of Miyazaki's 1984 sci-fi fantasy epic *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, the studio gained prominence with a series of hits, including *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988) and *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988). Today, Studio Ghibli is an institution, with numerous awards to their name—including Miyazaki's 2003 Academy Award for *Spirited Away* (2001). The exhibition at Mori Art Museum presents a rare chronicle of the studio's 30-year history, which almost ended in 2014 following Miyazaki's retirement. On display are movie posters and art as well as—not surprisingly—a gift shop jam-packed with Ghibli goodies. **Jul 7-Sep 11, 10am-8pm. Mori Art Museum. Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, 52F, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku. ¥1,100-¥2,300. ☎ Roppongi. <http://bit.ly/28PA1WY>**



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JUL 22-24 FUJI ROCK

Fuji Rock, as you know—unless you've been living under a non-Fuji rock—is Japan's premier music festival. Past years have seen high-calibre performers such as Arcade Fire, Radiohead, and The Chemical Brothers. And this year's event will not disappoint, with headlining acts Sigur Rós, Beck, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers set to take the stage. A strange rumor is floating around that everybody's favorite church will have a dianetics stall set up during Beck's Saturday performance, for people interested in personality audits. The festivities kick off Friday with Sigur Rós and other noteworthy acts—including James Blake—taking to the scenic Green Stage; ending on Sunday with the Chilis and other noteworthys, including Ben Harper and The Innocent Criminals. And then, of course, the weekend promises all the usual music-festival trimmings: a variable slew of acts, the joy of friendship, and unspoiled natural vistas. **Jul 22-24. Naeba Ski Resort, Yuzawa-cho, Niigata. <http://fujirock-eng.com/>**

JUL 30 SUMIDAGAWA FIREWORKS FESTIVAL

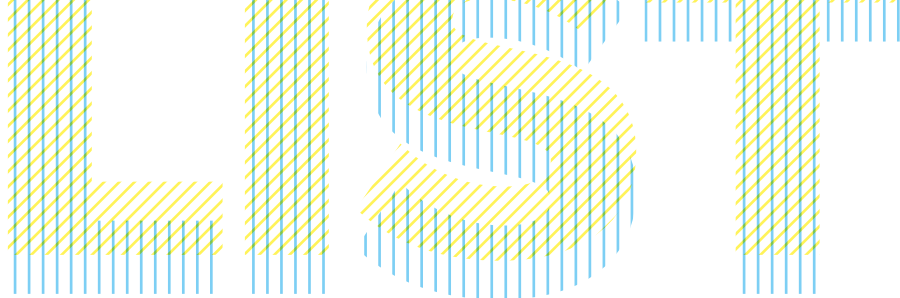
Firework season has finally arrived in Japan, and there is no greater spectacle than the renowned one by the Sumida River. The festival dates back to 1732, when fireworks were used to memorialize the deceased, notably those who had died as a result of Edo-era poverty and plague. In 1978 it became an annual fixture, revived under the name "Sumidagawa Hanabi Taikai" (Sumida River Fireworks Festival). Some demonstrations on offer include "Pokamono," which releases an explosion of squiggly lights that descend to the ground; and the much-adored "Starmine" technique, which simultaneously launches several varieties of fireworks in different shapes and colors. Note, the festival will be postponed in the event of heavy rain. **Jul 30, 7:05pm-8:30pm. Sumida Park. 7-1 Asakusa, Taito-ku. ☎ Asakusa. http://sumidagawa-hanabi.com/index_eg.html**

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UNTIL JUL 10 SMILING IN CONTEMPLATION

Buddhist gods depicted with one leg over the other and their hands held to their cheeks are known as "thoughtful" Bodhisattvas, in light of the profound contemplation this pose is designed to embody. The portrayal of Bodhisattvas derives from the birthplace of Buddhism in India, and came to Japan by way of China and Korea. The 6th to 8th centuries were a golden age for this kind of sculpture in Korea and Japan, producing many of what are now regarded as the apex of ancient Buddhist art. Among them is a Japanese National Treasure, the Bodhisattva at Chugui Temple in Nara Prefecture. This exhibition provides a unique chance to appreciate the pensive repose of Buddhist sculptures from Japan and Korea, and the rich interactions between these two civilizations since ancient times. **Until Jul 10, 9:30am-8pm. Tokyo National Museum. 13-9 Ueno Koen, Taito-ku. ¥400-¥1,000. ☎ Ueno. <http://bit.ly/28UHMOS>** *Dan Grunebaum*



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アフリカヒビヤフェスティバル

JUL 9-10

AFRICA HIBIYA FESTIVAL

Experience a slice of Africa this month in Hibiya Park. The festival will host a series of activities based around African culture, lifestyles, song, and dance, as well as a look into the latest trends from the continent. The festival will also be serving up a diverse menu of regional foods from different African countries, as well as a bazaar with all manner of African knick-knacks, delicacies, and workshops—including cooking classes, sundries and crafts stalls, fabric and clothing stalls, and many more. Live performances will include authentic African music, featuring the oh-so-rhythmic Djembe drum, guaranteed to get your buttocks moving! The event is hosted by the African Heritage Committee, a non-profit organization that works toward creating a bridge between Africa and Japan and fostering a richer understanding of the diverse continent. **Jul 9-10, Sat 10am-9pm; Sun 10am-5:30pm. Admission free. Hibiya Koen 1, Chiyoda-ku. ☎ Hibiya. <http://africah.web.fc2.com/>**



UNTIL AUG 1

AUSTRALIAN BLACK TRUFFLE

This month, Towers Modern Bistro in the prestigious Ritz-Carlton Midtown is serving up a menu featuring the sought-after Australian Black Truffle, flown in directly from the Land Down Under. Known for its intense, aromatic flavor, the Australian Black Truffle comes from the same variety as the famous French Perigord. If you are partial to the delicacy, now's the time to act: the Australian Black Truffle is only in season between June and August, peaking in maturity from mid-July to August. Renowned chef Chef Franck-Elie Laloum is dishing up three- and four-course menus (¥12,500-¥16,000/person), all featuring the beloved fungus. Dishes include Hokkaido scallop Carpaccio and black truffle as well as Alplaco chocolate mousse, sea salt sablé Breton, and black truffle ice cream. **Until Aug 1, 11am-2:30pm & 5:30pm-10pm. 9-7-1, Midtown, Minato-ku. ☎ Roppongi. Tel: 03-6434-8711. www.ritz-carlton.jp/restaurant/towers_grill**



JUL 9-10

OCEAN PEOPLES 2016

Are you an "ocean person"? If yes, celebrate summer in style in Yoyogi Park for this beach-themed festival, offering a slew of fun-filled activities including a kids' hula workshop and beach-related shopping. The festival will also feature two days of live music, with performances by Iri, Awesome City Club, toconoma, and many more. The festival is serving up a diverse menu of "beach food" and drinks, including Thai cuisine, pizza, organic burgers, fish and chips, and, of course, shaved ice. The event also focuses on environmental conservation, with an emphasis on raising awareness on the devastating effects of pollution and global warming on the world's oceans. Ocean Peoples is an opportunity for patrons to think about the realities facing our precious natural watery-wonders, celebrate their inherent beauty, and have a good time in Yoyogi Park. **July 9-10, 11am-9pm. 2-1 Yoyogikamizonochi, Shibuya. Admission free. ☎ Yoyogi-koen. <http://oceanpeoples.com>**

《ムーランド・ラ・ギャレットの舞踏会》1876年 油彩/カンヴァス オルセー美術館
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UNTIL AUG 22

RENOIR EXHIBITION

The National Art Center Tokyo presents over 100 works from the renowned French artist Pierre Auguste Renoir, in "Renoir: Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay & Musée de l'Orangerie." The collection features well-known works—including paintings, drawings, and sculptures—gathered from the premier Impressionist museums in Paris. The exhibition is spread across 10 different sections, with works ranging from his early realistic nude portraits through to his visionary Impressionist works. The exhibition also includes the Japan debut of Renoir's iconic *Dance at the Moulin de la Galette* (1876)—the so-called "crown jewel" of Impressionism—which famously depicts a 19th-century Sunday afternoon scene in the working-class Montmartre neighborhood of Paris. **Until Aug 22, Sat-Mon & Wed-Thu, 10am-6pm; Fri, 10am-8pm. 7-22-2 Roppongi, Minato-ku. Admission, ¥1,600. ☎ Nogizaka. <http://renoir.exhn.jp/>**



写真提供：一般社団法人千代田区観光協会

JUL 15

CHIYODA FLOATING LANTERN FESTIVAL

The Imperial Palace moat lights up this month in the annual floating lanterns festival. Seven hundred lanterns will be released in Chidorigafuchi—a pond located at the north end of the Imperial Palace, in Kitanomaru Park. From sunset into the night, these lanterns will beautifully glow, illuminating the cooling water and lush greenery. The serene scene will transport you out of the city, and it's likely you will feel as though you've stepped into a fairy tale. Lucky patrons have the opportunity to apply for boats to float through the captivating scene. Upon reservation, yukata rental and dressing services will also be available, to ensure a full fantastical experience. There will be live entertainment, as numerous artists take the stage and set the mood. The floating lantern festival is the perfect way to spend a summer night—assuming it doesn't rain, of course, in which case it's all called off. **Jul 15, 7pm. Chidorigafuchi Ryokudo. 2-2-11 Kudan-minami, Chiyoda-ku. ☎ Kudanshita. www.kanko-chiyoda.jp/**



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UNTIL SEP 2018

EDITOR'S PICK

THE SNOOPY MUSEUM

The last few months have certainly been exciting for fans of the popular Peanuts franchise, especially in Tokyo, with everything from the release of *The Peanuts Movie* to the opening of The Peanuts Café in Nakameguro. So it stands to reason that Japan would consolidate its love affair with a tribute to its most beloved beagle with a dedicated museum in his honor. The Snoopy Museum will run until September 2018, and feature different aspects of the of the series with monthly exhibitions curated by California's Charles M. Schulz Museum. Displays will include early and pre-Peanuts Schulz illustrations, music from Vince Guaraldi—who composed the original soundtrack for the animated series—unpublished sketches and artwork, as well as memorabilia. And, of course, there will be lots of Snoopy. **Until Sep 2018, 10am-8pm. Roppongi 5-6-20, Minato-ku. ¥400-¥2,000. ☎ Roppongi. www.snoopymuseum.tokyo/en/**



THE WINEHOUSE RETROSPECTIVE

Amy sheds light on singer and mental health

BY GEORGE PETERS

"I don't think I'm going to be at all famous," says a teenage Amy Winehouse at the beginning of *Amy*, the Asif Kapadia-directed documentary on the late singer-songwriter's life. As she speaks, in her brazen Cockney accent, the young hopeful is on her way to a record label, where she is to perform a showcase. "I don't think I could handle it. I'd probably go mad."

The foretelling quote sets the tone for the rest of the film. By the time of Winehouse's passing in 2011 as a result of alcohol intoxication, her reputation had far exceeded her art. The media outlets that adorned Winehouse with praises during her rise to fame following 2006's *Back to Black*, escalating her name and lyrics as punchlines, as tabloids documented her struggle with mental illness and substance abuse—a trend that continued until her death.

But the person who appears on screen in Kapadia's documentary is a far cry from the ubiquitous caricature of Winehouse.

The documentary begins with home movies depicting a young, jazz-loving Jewish girl from Camden, as she moves into a London flat with her two girlfriends. Fresh-faced and playful, Winehouse would serenade pals with "Happy Birthday," and the earthy voice the world would come to know glided over the notes with ease and an almost-childlike blithe.

"What was really interesting was that a lot of people got really emotional when she was young and happy," recounts Kapadia, in an interview courtesy of entertainment company Valeria. He states that audiences had never seen a positive Winehouse during her life under the spotlight. "Is it sad that they thought she was just miserable and lost all her life?"

Kapadia fuses home movies with the voices of the singer's family and friends. The footage is periodically interspersed with Winehouse's music at strategic points in her story, with lyrics emphasized on screen, allowing the singer to

help narrate her own story through her work.

"I wanted to see Amy. It's about her. I want to see her eyes and I want to see her face," says Kapadia, explaining his directorial choice, and how he applied this to 2010's *Senna*, a documentary on the late Formula One racer Ayrton Senna. "It has weirdly become my style. I don't like talking heads. I'm not interested in seeing that person, as it takes me out of the film. Whereas watching [Amy], it's about her. Her face for me is so expressive; you just want to keep watching her."

The director adds that the journey of those in Winehouse's life, told through videos, photos, and audio clips, contribute to the singer's biography. But it's the expressions on Winehouse's face that tell a darker tale—particularly the gradually fearful reactions she has to cameras, whether being filmed by her husband or the paparazzi, during her struggles with relationships and family, that ultimately led to her dependency on drugs and alcohol.

At a certain point, the film stops being a story about a singer with addictions, but rather one of a person with mental struggles who lacked the right kind of support around her. (And yes, she did go to rehab—multiple times.) While fame is an entity that exploited and enabled her, it also served as the fun-house mirror that distorted Winehouse's depression to the eyes of the public.

Of course, the film is strictly about Winehouse. But it's difficult to not connect the public's treatment of her struggles with how mental illness is treated in Japan. Clinical depression and its variants are still stigmatized and thus swept under rugs in Japanese society, resulting in little available support. The documentary shows Winehouse being dehumanized into a joke and tabloid fodder, which isn't too far off from the reduction of people who attempt or die by suicide, into statistics and excuses for train delays.

"They were talking about Amy Winehouse," Kapadia recalls, when pitching the movie to some U.S. film executives. "And somebody else said to me, 'Oh, why do you want to make a film about a junkie?' There is that kind of perception, where people just throw away somebody. It's probably going on in your country ... and everywhere. I don't know who they are; you might know. Even if they are not famous, it's going on. It's too easy."

While he wasn't necessarily a fan of Winehouse's upon starting the project, *Amy* celebrates the singer's virtues and has given Kapadia a newfound appreciation for her.

"[Winehouse is] really cool—very funny, intelligent, and very special. She is the kind of girl where you wish you could have hung out with her. When I see that young [footage] of her being ordinary and so at peace with herself, I think that she's quite special. There is also something about her being so ordinary, which is also what I can relate to, I suppose."

Amy out Jul 16, at Kadokawa Cinemas in Shinjuku and Yurakucho, and Human Trust Cinema Shibuya. <http://amy-movie.jp>



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TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

Actress-turned-politician Saya Takagi fights for cannabis legalization

BY MASA TANIZAWA

The relationship between present-day Japan and hemp is a highly tense one. While once a widely-used commodity in pre-Showa-Era Japan in both herbal medicine and textiles, taima (“hemp”) has become criminalized since the passing of the Cannabis Control Act in 1948, and the social condemnation of the crop followed suit.

But according to environmentalist and politician Saya Takagi, changing legal and social attitudes toward the plant and its variants just might help Japan combat climate change and solve its environmental concerns.

“In 1948, America’s General Health Questionnaire established this law,” says Takagi. “Until that point, cannabis was something people used in various industries and in tradition. Then one day, they were told it was forbidden ... It’s not a ban that resulted from research the Japanese did in Japan; we banned it here because other countries told us to do so. From then on, the Japanese have been fed anti-cannabis propaganda. The imprint that left on the Japanese was the idea that cannabis was dangerous.”

A former actress best-known for her work on Japanese drama *Okane ga nai*, Takagi resigned from the world of entertainment in 2012 to become more involved in her environmental activism. Under her birth name Ikue Masudo, she openly spoke out against nuclear energy, and for the legalization of medical marijuana.

“Last year, medical costs in Japan reached 40 trillion yen,” says Takagi to Metropolis at her home in the remote Chiba countryside. “I believe we can significantly reduce that number by using more cannabis as a natural herbal medicine, as opposed to chemicals.”

Takagi explains that there are many unused fields throughout Japan, where cultivating cannabis could give farmers new work and improve financial matters.

“This plant that we’ve been told to say ‘no’

to is something that can easily be grown by simply sowing the seeds. If we just do that, it could rescue our economy, benefit people’s health, and also give birth to a new cycle. This is something we ought to be doing.”

Takagi has also publicly dubbed herself a “naturalist”—a term that describes a lifestyle of self-sufficiency that Takagi adopted, that is more reliant on natural energy, minimal consumption, and subsistence agriculture.

“Before becoming involved in environmental activism and telling the world about it, I wanted to become a person who lived that lifestyle. That’s why I chose to call myself a ‘naturalist’: it’s living as one with nature, without using fossil fuel or nuclear energy, and instead utilizing what you have in the land—and not using too much.”

Activism eventually led Takagi to enter politics, where she believes she could be more directly involved with laws and bring about the change she desires.

Presently, she is running for the 2016 Regular House of Councilors election, under her stage name, with the legalization of cannabis and marijuana as her campaign platform. Takagi believes that this would be the first step in bringing about change in other areas of Japanese government and society.

“If we change our attitudes on cannabis, people will become healthier,” she explains. “When people are healthier, their thinking will



I FEEL THAT RATHER THAN JAPANESE PEOPLE, IT’S THE FOREIGNERS WHO UNDERSTAND THE BEAUTY OF JAPAN. THEY ALSO COMPARE.”

also change. It’s important that the Japanese remember what it means to have a pleasant life.”

Takagi adds that if Japan maintains its unhealthy lifestyle, they will be leaving behind very little for future generations.

“I feel that rather than Japanese people, it’s the foreigners who understand the beauty of Japan. They also compare,” says the councilor hopeful. “The theme here is ‘how to change the frozen state of the Japanese people.’”

Takagi isn’t the only figure in politics to be advocating marijuana legalization. First Lady Akie Abe is set to headline as keynote speaker at the Kyoto Hemp Forum on July 2. The annual event, organized by the Japan Hemp Association, gathers hemp advocates worldwide and focuses on utilizing hemp as a biomass energy source.

The future of hemp legalization in Japan remains uncertain. But the results of the House of Councilors election this July could see steps being taken in that direction.



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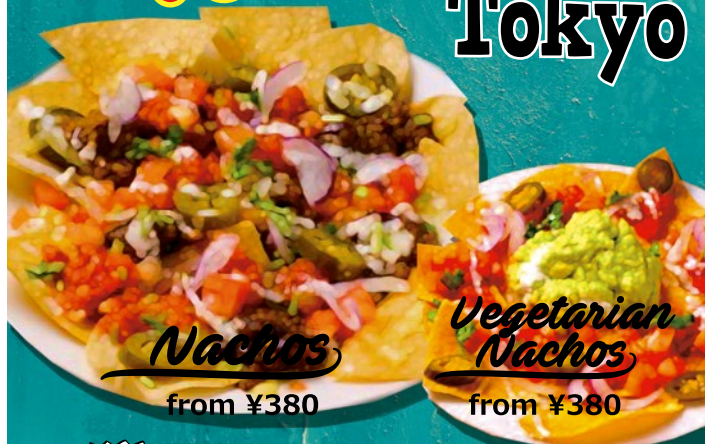
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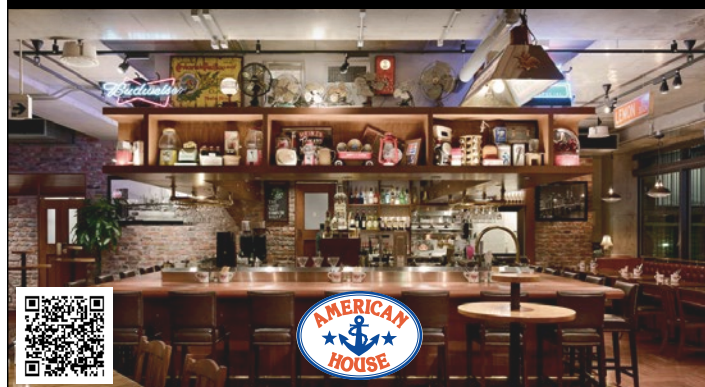
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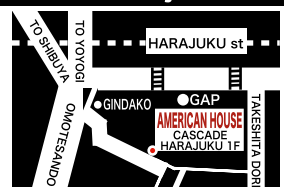
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PITA PERFECTION

Doing it right at Kuumba du Falafel

BY TREVOR CAMPBELL

It's unlikely you'll stumble upon Kuumba du Falafel by accident. Tucked away on the ground floor of a highway-side building in Shibuya, its sole identifier is a cardboard sign in the window.

Nonetheless, it looks like the secret's out. The modest lunch counter's seven or eight bar stools were packed shortly after opening for lunch, with hungry patrons squeezed in for the chance to taste Kuumba's fresh, refined take on the Middle Eastern staple food.

It's modestly-sized, but the floor-to-ceiling windows let in plenty of light and make the restaurant feel much bigger than it is. If you're

familiar with the falafel as street food, the prices seem a little big, too. But while Kuumba's larger portions aren't cheap—a hearty falafel plate is ¥1,580—their lunch set is a good deal at only ¥1,000 for a half-size falafel sandwich and small bowl of lentil soup (available from 11:30am-2:30pm, Tuesdays to Sundays).

I start things off with an order of Waiola's 100-percent coconut water (¥280). It's a small serving, but the juice is sweet and refreshing, with a full-bodied flavor that pairs well with the rest of the menu. If coconuts aren't your thing, Kuumba also offers a selection of organic sodas and a small wine menu.



While the meal is being prepared, my server delivers a “paper” plate made of china and gleaming cutlery. It's a nice addition that signals the haute departure from the low-brow falafel you may be more familiar with.

The soup arrives first, a hot bowl of garlicky lentil broth cut through with earthy cumin and onion. It's surprisingly thin for lentil soup, but with a warm, buttery taste. A small pile of sunken lentils adds a nice texture to each spoonful.

The main event arrives only a few spoonfuls in: Kuumba's falafel sandwich, handed to me across the counter in thin parchment paper. At first glance, it's like a bouquet of wildflowers, and smells just as fresh. It's quite a presentation—big leaves of red lettuce, lightly fried eggplant slices, fresh basil pesto, and chunks of tomatoes and cucumbers that barely fit inside. I'm given a tube of house-made hot sauce that's a bit thick and hard to evenly distribute, but has serious bite and adds amazing flavor to the sandwich.

While there's a lot to see, some of the best bits are hidden inside. The pickled purple cabbage has good crunch and a nice sour tang, complemented by some unexpected but welcome capers. There's a good helping of hummus, which doesn't overpower but adds a great texture to the sandwich and plays well with the lacing of cool, creamy tahini. The pita bread is soft and thin, but with enough substance to keep it from getting soggy.

Surprisingly, the falafel balls aren't the focus here. They're well done—small, with a nice crunch that melts into a soft, chewy center—but they aren't the stars of the sandwich.

It's a stellar offering but a total mess to eat, which makes it especially well-suited to counter-style seating. And with everyone facing the same direction, you don't have to worry about getting clocked with a faceful of hot sauce.

Service is quick and attentive, and the menu is in both English and Japanese. Sure, you might need a smartphone to help you find it, but Kuumba du Falafel is well worth the effort.

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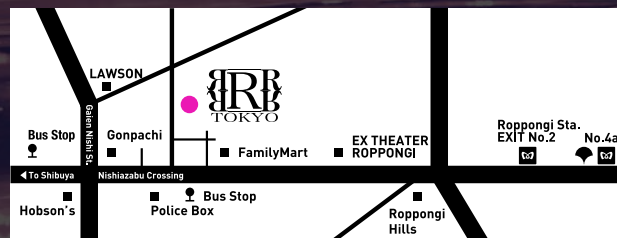
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BEYOND MATCHA

Japan's creative and salubrious cha scene

BY JESSICA THOMPSON

With everyone from Gwyneth to Kylie Jenner photographed sipping almond milk *matcha* lattes or brandishing matcha whisks and other *chadō* (tea room) paraphernalia, Japan's iridescent green tea powder has dominated the country's tea export scene in recent years.

The camellia sinensis plant, from which matcha and other Japanese green teas are cultivated, was introduced to Japan by Zen Buddhist monks in the 9th century, who brought tea back with them from their religious studies in China. Several thousand years before this—according to Chinese legend—the tea concept had been serendipitously birthed by a leaf-carrying zephyr, which dropped leaves into the cup of hot water being sipped on by Chinese emperor Shen Nong. But aside from its preeminent bewitching matcha tea powder, Japan has an inventive array of infusions that are worth checking out.

KOMBUCHA (KELP TEA)

A compound of *kombu* (kelp) and *cha* (tea), this beverage is not to be confused with the fermented drink popular in yoga circles, which is not made from seaweed at all. Somewhere along the way, the Japanese term was borrowed—perhaps because of the characteristic thick, slimy-looking growth suspended in liquid of the fermented “kombucha,” which resembles kelp in the ocean.

This tea tastes like water scooped from rock pools filled with seaweed that had been warmed by the sun: salty, smooth, cleansing, and distinctly oceanic.

GENMAICHA (TOASTED BROWN RICE TEA)

The folk tale beginnings of genmaicha lie with a clumsy ill-fated servant in 15th-century Japan, who dropped rice into the green tea he was brewing for his samurai master, only to lose his head at the edge of a katana as a result. However, after sampling the deliciousness of the new brew, the samurai felt regret over his actions and ordered the tea to be served every morning in

commemoration.

The tea has the characteristic grassy notes of green tea but with a smooth, nutty, toasted cereal-like depth from the toasted brown rice.

MUGICHA (TOASTED BARLEY TEA)

Although mugicha is drunk both hot and cold year-round, cold or iced mugicha is the taste of summer in Japan and, along with cold beer, is regarded as part of a *shokibarai* (“beat the heat”) regime. Beyond its refreshing nature and light, toasty flavor, the amber-colored tea is antioxidative and antibacterial, promotes good blood circulation, is naturally caffeine-free, and contains melatonin, which aids relaxation and sleeping patterns.

KUROMAMECHA (BLACK SOYBEAN TEA)

Kuromame (black soybean) *cha* (tea) is said to be the “diet secret” of the East, and is a general nutritional powerhouse. It's high in antioxidants, particularly anthocyanins, which are heralded for their properties that promote anti-aging, cancer prevention, lower cholesterol, and anti-inflammation. High protein and low GI make this tea an alleged weight loss wonder, working as an appetite suppressant.

GOBOCHA (BURDOCK ROOT TEA)

This tea has one of those “tastes like dirt or old shoes, but in the good way” flavors. Intensely earthy and mushroom-like, gobocho is prepared from *gobo* (burdock root). Its list of health-promoting accolades include improving circulatory health, digestive tract health, and skin; treating sore throats and colds; detoxifying; aiding acne, eczema, and psoriasis; and alleviating and preventing gout. And to top it off, it is said to be an aphrodisiac.

Read the full version of this and other articles at www.metropolisjapan.com.

RECIPE

GENMAICHA PANNA COTTA

BY JESSICA THOMPSON



INGREDIENTS

- 200ml milk
- 300ml cream (40%)
- 2 tsp gelatin
- 2 tbsp water
- 2 tbsp genmaicha
- 3 tbsp sugar
- Kuromitsu syrup (or golden/caramel syrup), to serve
- Kinako powder, to serve

SERVINGS
4

PREPARATION

1. Grease four half-cup dariole molds or ramekins with a neutral-flavored oil.
2. Combine gelatin and water in a small dish and set aside for 10 minutes to bloom.
3. Combine cream, milk, and genmaicha in a saucepan. Place over medium heat, bring to scalding point, then remove from heat and set aside to infuse for at least 20 min.
4. Strain, discarding the tea leaves. Add a little more milk or cream to bring the liquid volume to 500ml, if necessary. Pour the strained mixture and gelatin into a saucepan over a low heat. Gently heat the mixture, stirring, until the gelatin has completely dissolved.
5. Pour mixture into prepared molds, allow to cool thoroughly, then transfer to a refrigerator to set for at least 4 h or overnight. (This can be less if serving the panna cotta in molds.)
6. Before serving, dip the molds into hot water to loosen the panna cotta, then gently upturn onto plates. Drizzle with kuromitsu and sprinkle with kinako powder.



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FEATURED MOVIE

THE PROGRAM

Cyclist Lance Armstrong overcame testicular cancer, started a global children's cancer foundation, and won the Tour de France *seven times*. A true hero. Until he wasn't. It seems he was also a champion of circumventing the sport's testing regimen for

banned performance-enhancing drugs.

But you know all this. And Stephen Frears' film will teach you little that's new. But perhaps those who had been willing to give Lance the benefit of the doubt (like me) will be fewer in number. Sigh.

What the movie does do is raise questions: What kind of man values winning so much that it's worth living such a dark lie? How was this elaborate hoax kept secret for so long, when so many people were onto it? I wish it had gone deeper.

But your criticism of such structural uncertainties is muted as you watch Ben Foster disappearing into the lead role, capturing Lance's

charm as well as his arrogance and remoteness. A tour de force. (Foster reportedly subjected himself to the title doping program during filming.) And Chris O'Dowd is superb as David Walsh, the sports journalist on whose book this is based. Walsh sensed what was happening early on and dogged Lance for 13 years, often at great personal and professional cost.

The man's only dream was to win the Tour. He's showed little remorse at being caught. I wanted to know about the forces that produced such an accomplished, hollow fake. Japanese title: *Giwaku no Champion* (103 min)



ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Disney repackaging squared. Cubed. Only today's Mouse House could throw so much

money, raw talent, and cinematic skill into a project and end up with such a transparent and banal merchandizing mashup. There's little plot and less substance in this financially mandated, soulless and joyless sequel, and it's almost painful to watch the great cast dumb itself down to the dramatically inert script. But there is a lot of movement and bright colors, so it might entertain very small kids. That is if you want those kids to develop incredibly bland entertainment standards. There's no wonder in this Wonderland. Japanese title: *Alice in Wonderland: Jikan no Tabi* (113 min)



10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

An apparently kidnapped woman wakes up in an underground shelter with an obviously loony survivalist tell-

ing her he's saved her life. Sure, she says, and plots her escape. Conspiracy? Abduction? Terrorism? Alien Invasion? You won't know from one scene to the next. Mary Elizabeth Winstead is spot on here, smart and strong yet vulnerable. But the movie revolves around John Goodman, whose rare ability to do both loveable and deeply menacing will have you squirming. It all works because the dread is psychological, not gimmicky. It also pokes a little fun at itself and the horror genre as a whole. (105 min)



MR. DYNAMITE: THE RISE OF JAMES BROWN

"The Godfather of Soul" changed the way we listen to music. Now documentary writer/director

Alex Gibney (*Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*, *Freakonomics*, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*) turns his skills to capturing the energy, drama and pure showmanship of the man. This smart and compassionate bio-doc avoids hagiography. The warts are included: the brutal childhood, the arrogance, the abuse of women and (gasp) his support for Richard Nixon. But the emphasis is on the onstage energy. 2014's *Get On Up* was a good dramatization of the singer's life and career. This is better. Japanese title: *Mr. Dynamite: Funk no Teio James Brown* (120 min)



TRIPLE 9

A gang of bent cops planning a major bank heist for the Russian mob plots to draw away responding units by shooting a cop on the other side of town (999 is cop code for officer down). This pulpy remix of crooked cop opera clichés by nihilist director John Hillcoat (*The Road, Lawless*) works to the extent it does through sheer momentum and an almost embarrassingly overqualified cast (Casey Affleck, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Clifton Collins, Jr., Anthony Mackie, Aaron Paul, Woody Harrelson, and a ridiculously miscast Kate Winslet as a Russian mob matriarch). At the end it's considerably less than the sum of its parts. Japanese title: *Triple 9: Uragiri no Code* (115 min)



LEGEND

Tom Hardy again demonstrates—twice—why he's one of the most versatile actors working today. Here he plays the twin Kray brothers, mobsters who terrorized London in the '50s and '60s. Despite being identical twins, the suave and brooding Reggie and the dangerously unhinged Ronnie couldn't have been more emotionally and intellectually different. Pity Brian Helgeland's lurching movie about them comes off so tonally incoherent and disappointingly shallow. No clue whatsoever as to what made these psychopaths tick. But still worth catching for Hardy's performance(s). Japanese title: *Legend: Kyōki no Bigaku* (132 min)



CITIZENFOUR

Laura Poitras was just planning the third installment in a trilogy on government snooping in the wake of 9/11 when she got an e-mail from someone saying he wants to blow the whistle on the NSA. She traveled to Hong Kong to meet the guy. The result is an Oscar-winning piece of documentary filmmaking that plays like a thriller. One early question says it all. "What's your name, anyway?" "Edward Snowden. Call me Ed." This remarkably intimate and profoundly chilling movie is required viewing for (1) those who think Snowden's a hero, (2) a traitor, (3) haven't decided, and (4) anyone who owns a phone. Japanese title: *Citizenfour: Snowden no Bakuro* (114 min)



COLLIDE

Nicholas Hoult is an American doing a little driving for European drug smugglers. When his girlfriend (Felicity Jones, a letdown after *The Theory of Everything*) needs an expensive operation, he decides to rip off his employers. What could go wrong? There ensues a high-speed, low-suspense car chase on Germany's Autobahns, I guess to have some expensive cars for the posters. Ben Kingsley's over-the-top Turkish drug-dealing pimp is amusing, until he isn't. And Anthony Hopkins can do this crime boss thing in his sleep. So, to sum up, a kind of a euro *Fast and Furious* with a smaller budget but better actors. Japanese title: *Autobahn* (99 min)



IRRATIONAL MAN

A brilliant, solipsistic philosophy professor/author of elastic moral principles (an off-kilter Joaquin Phoenix) rationalizes his way to a unique approach to bringing himself out of an existential funk: the perfect murder. A sunny coed (Emma Stone) is on to him, to her peril. A brilliantly cast Parker Posey puts in a career best. I'm not at all sure what Woody Allen is aiming for here. Slyly comic, but not exactly a comedy, and unabashedly intellectual. Perhaps a Dostoyevskian rumination on the monster within. I liked it on several levels. Many did not. Never listen to film critics on Woody Allen. Japanese title: *Kyōju no okashina mōsō satsujin* (95 min)



BURNT

Two-Michelin-star bad-boy celebrity chef (a committed Bradley Cooper) blew it all with his bratty behavior. Now he's repented and ready to go after that elusive third star. This one's got all the ingredients: a cast that includes Sienna Miller, Daniel Bruhl, Riccardo Scamarcio and Omar Sy, and the cinematography seems almost edible. But the resultant meal is unappetizing with a bad aftertaste. *Cocktail* with cooks. The story arc is predictable, and there's no focus or urgency. Creativity is crucial in the world of competitive cuisine. Would that were true for movies about it. Send it back to the kitchen. Japanese title: *Nitsu-boshi no Ryōrinin* (101 min)



THE LAZARUS EFFECT

A bunch of brainy researchers looking into reanimating dead things goes off the rails when an electrocuted team member becomes their next subject. This "boo" movie cheapie will be remembered, if at all, for its wildly overqualified cast, headed up by Olivia Wilde. It cobbles together bits from *Carrie*, *Flatliners*, *The Shining*, and other superior genre efforts, is heavy on the pseudo-scientific babble, and cheats. Not suspenseful, not scary. Inexorably, it devolves into clichéd horror gimmickry, and by the end, it's little more than a generic zombie movie with a slightly better-looking undead person. (83 min)



KNOCK KNOCK

An architect whose wife and kids are away for the weekend kindly lets a pair of stranded hotties into his isolated home during a rainstorm. They become increasingly seductive, eventually suggesting a ménage à trois. Being a mere human (and male), he agrees, but only reluctantly, so you know he's still a good guy. Things get out of hand, are not what they seem, yada yada. I guess it was only a matter of time before the oaken Keanu Reeves sank to doing a movie with torture-porn maestro Eli Roth. This movie is so bad it's painful to watch, especially when Reeves tries on an unhinged Nicolas Cage tirade. (99 min)



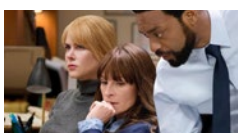
EX MACHINA

In Alex Garland's able directing debut, a lowly programmer (Domhnall Gleeson) is invited by his reclusive (and quite possibly mad) genius boss (Oscar Isaac) to help him determine whether his latest AI robot (Alicia Vikander, owning the movie) has achieved consciousness. Thematically epic while still providing pulpy sci-fi thrills, this is a smart and original bit of speculative yet plausible science fiction about artificial intelligence that has some genuinely intelligent things to say. Quietly unnerving and never less than riveting, this one will mess with your head and stay with you for weeks. (108 min)



MONEY MONSTER

The on-air set of a clownish financial TV guru is invaded by an armed young man angry at losing all his money in a now-worthless fund the guy recommended. The satire is campy (we are not made mad as hell), the drama is shaky, and the thriller aspects implausible. But somehow director Jodie Foster manages to pull it all together into an amiable whole that's more entertaining than it has a right to be. It's briskly paced, and having George Clooney, Julia Roberts, and Jack O'Connell doing the acting doesn't hurt. Nor does the topical nature of the plot. But don't be expecting *The Big Short* or *Network*. (98 min)



SECRET IN THEIR EYES

Star-studded but misguided English-language adaptation turns director Juan Jose Campanella's 2010 Best Foreign Language Oscar-winning *Secreto de sus ojos* into a grim law and order procedural ineffectively transplanted from the turmoil of 1970s Argentina to the USA in the months just after 9/11. This is an instantly forgettable, sluggishly paced potboiler in which the coincidences are many, the motivations questionable, and the climax laughable. None of this, however, is the fault of Chiwetel Ejiofor, Nicole Kidman, or Julia Roberts (a standout), and fans of the actors will not be disappointed. Japanese title: *Secret Eyes*. (111 min)



CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

Iron Man wants to curb a perceived destructive vigilantism and place the Avengers under UN control. Captain America thinks that would hinder their evil-fighting autonomy. Factions form and fight. All this latest Avengers outing had to do was be better than *Age of Ultron*. It's more dramatically coherent and, for want of a better word, mature. I realize internal strife is built in to the title, but this "team" still spends way too much time fighting one another. OK, superhero movies are subjective. I was not edified or particularly entertained, but many still into the genre thought it was pretty good. (146 min)



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CINEMATIC UNDERGROUND

CULTURE CLUB

BY KEVIN MCGUE

For movie lovers who yearn for something more highbrow than the summer popcorn movies, Tokyo theaters offer screenings of theater, art, and dance. First up is the latest installment of National Theatre Live, which presents live performances from the venerable London playhouse. The new production of *Othello* resets Shakespeare's tale in a modern world of military technology. Stage vet Adrian Lester takes the title role and Rory Kinnear of the 007 series is the duplicitous Iago. Running July 2-8 at Bunkamura's

Le Cinema (2-24-1 Dogenzaka, Shibuya-ku; www.bunkamura.co.jp)

Take in one of the most famous art collections in the world—without buying a plane ticket—with the film *Florence and the Uffizi Gallery 3D/4K*. The latest ultra-high definition 3-D technology was used to allow viewers to experience Renaissance masterpieces such as Michelangelo's "David" and even Leonardo DiVinci's "Adoration of the Magi," which has been off limits to gallery visitors for several years as it was restored. Starting July 9 at

Cine Switch in Ginza (4-4-5 Ginza, Chuo-ku; www.cineswitch.com)

The film *Our Last Tango* uses contemporary interviews, dramatizations and new dance performances to tell the story of Argentina's most famous dancers María Nieves Rego and Juan Carlos Copes. The two met as teenagers and danced together for 50 years, introducing tango to the world, before being forced to break up the act. Starting July 9 at Bunkamura's Le Cinema (2-24-1 Dogenzaka, Shibuya-ku; www.bunkamura.co.jp)

The documentary *Everybody Street* (Japanese title: *Photographers in New York*) takes a look at the working days of famed street photographers, including Bruce Davidson, Joel Meyerowitz, and the late Mary Ellen Mark. They share how they explore the big city through the lens, as well as their run-ins with police and irate subjects. Starting late July at Image Forum. Check website for dates. (2-10-2 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku; www.imageforum.co.jp)



Courtesy of Sky 3D

EIGA

DESPERATE SUNFLOWERS

BY ROB SCHWARTZ

Japanese films about females in their forties or older are rare, as are movies directed by women. In the present piece, both protagonists are women over 40 and the director is an actress who has taken her place behind the camera. Unfortunately, the results don't differ much from the standard Japanese melodramatic fare. Tetsuko (Yo Yoshida) has had a bugaboo about her cousin Natsuko (Yoshino Kimura) since they were kids, and the latter destroyed her favorite dress out of spite. As adults, Tetsuko is a serious, stern, and unemotional workhorse lawyer, while Natsuko is a brassy, irresponsible shyster who regularly gets into trouble. Natsuko gets a good job and marries, but her dry personality leads to divorce and a life of work only. One day, the cousin tracks her down because she needs a legal defense against a romantic interest she tried to hustle. Tetsuko reluctantly takes the case, but



after she wins, the irresponsible client disappears again, sans fees for her representation. What starts out as an intriguing premise soon devolves into Natsuko continually begging for legal help in cases where she has clearly swindled people. Pathetic fights between the two lead to an absurd climax

where the pair crashes a wedding to humiliate a crook, who cheated people with Natsuko. One would like to say something complimentary about the development in this flick, but the story plummets to such ridiculous depths, it's hard to. Skip it. (Japanese title: *Iya na Onna*; 105 min.)



WAGAKKI BAND

Ancient sounds reborn

BY DAN GRUNEBAUM

In the four years since their formation, Wagakki Band have toured the world and reached millions via YouTube. *Metropolis* spoke to Yuko Suzuhana, vocalist for the neo-traditional J-pop juggernaut, about Wagakki's relentless drive to bring obscure and ancient sounds to a worldwide audience.

When did you first meet? What was your impression of each other?

All Wagakki members are friends I met at various places. The first ones I met were Kiyoshi Ibukuro and Daisuke Kaminaga, when I was looking for koto and shakuhachi players in 2012. The three of us started an acoustic unit, Kafugetsu. We definitely met by fate. I feel very comfortable being around those two and I knew that we would work together for a long time. I then met Wasabi [drums], Machiya [guitar], and Asa [bass] at an event organized by a Japanese video site; they were already popular on the internet. We got along right away and became friends. Machiya was someone whom I had never met before. He seemed like a dangerous type, from a woman's point of view. I got along with Wasabi and Asa easily, and went out for a drink. I met Kurona [wadaiko] through Kaminaga and Ibukuro, and the moment we met, we hit it off. Beni [tsugaru shamisen] came to see the concert of Kafugetsu,

and showed interest in doing something together. First, she seemed like a difficult person, but it was only because she was shy around new people. We get along very well now.

Who are some important musical influences?

I have to say it was classical music, which I studied for a long time, followed by Disney music. I listened to jazz, J-pop, and the Western pop music of my mother's generation.

How did you discover traditional Japanese music and shigin?

I think shigin fits Japanese music and the vocal cords of Japanese people. Japanese music was cherished in the beautiful seasons of Japan. You can feel stasis and dynamism in its sounds. You can feel Japanese history in a timeless way.

What are the challenges of fusing traditional Japanese music with pop and rock?

Wagakki instruments were made to pursue the tone of each sound. Therefore, we need to be creative to enhance the tone in pop or rock ensembles. We are careful with the arrangement of the tracks and selection of mics and gear. It is also difficult to sing using shigin techniques in rock tempos. I'm trying to use different vocal methods also so that listeners can enjoy more than just the shigin style.

What do traditional sensei think about Wagakki Band?

Many were resentful at first. As we became more active, those people started to change the way they think. They started to understand the way we are approaching the music, even though we don't play in a straightforward traditional style.

What is your songwriting process like?

Suzuhana, Machiya, and Asa write songs. Basically, the composer is in charge of the arrangement, creating solos and adding sounds. First, we start with rhythm sections: wadaiko, drums, and bass; then wagakki, such as koto, shamisen, shakuhachi, and guitar to finish up. As we have many instruments, we do more subtraction than addition.

Tell us about your fashion approach.

Wagakki Band expresses the current Japan, flexibly accepting overseas cultures. Not only in our sound, we try to fuse Japan and other cultures in our costumes. There are some members who are more Japanese-style, and [others] more Western. I dance during the performance as well, so I try to find how to do that more effectively.

Tell us about your SXSW and New York shows.

As American audiences are more exposed to entertainment, it was challenging. First, we were nervous, but we felt at one with the audience as we performed. We enjoy playing for American audiences, as their reaction is more direct than Japanese. I could find a new self.

What is something people don't yet know about Wagakki Band?

I think we can make an announcement soon, but our song was chosen as a theme song for an event. I hope this opens up more opportunities for our international activities.

Wagakki Band. <http://wagakki.band.jp>

Read our full interview with Wagakki's Suzuhana online at www.metropolisjapan.com.

ALBUM REVIEW



ARIANA GRANDE DANGEROUS WOMAN

BY LAURIER TIERNAN

The title of Ariana Grande's new release is "*Dangerous Woman*" ... yet the contents of this album are not very dangerous. But that's not to say they're not good or surprising—there are both unexpected treats and artistic merit to be found throughout the record, in scientifically calculated doses.

The first surprise comes in the opening seconds of track one, "Moonlight." While the album title conjures images of speed and aggression, the opening tune begins with only glockenspiel-like keys and a gentle crooning over a tempo that clocks in under 70 BPM—only slightly faster than the human heart at rest.

The next track—the album's namesake—actually pulls the metronome down lower, with a thick R&B groove of 44 BPM. The apparent message is that rather than competing with the Taylor Swifts of the world, Ms. Grande is going to lay it down, slow and heavy, as if claiming ownership.

Track three shifts things up to a traditional pop-song tempo, with the Janet Jackson-esque "Be Alright."

The arrangements throughout the album hold pretty consistently to recent Top-10 EDM standards, with production that appears deceptively minimalist, yet complexly layered. The lyrics mostly focus on the starting phases of relationships and sexuality, befitting a 22-year-old pop star.

Guest appearances are chosen carefully and logically. Nicki Minaj brings her tasteful nastiness, while strong performances by Lil Wayne and Future bookend a cameo by Macy Gray, who is featured like a sampled vintage masterpiece. The co-writers are chosen more shrewdly, with Savan Kotecha (Bieber, Britney, Maroon 5) and Max Martin—the King Midas of producers—figuring prominently in the credits.

Even the album artwork shows Grande exercising control of her art. While some critics might dismiss her as a puppet, in every photo where she could show more skin under someone else's creative direction, she is covering up. Other photos even portray her wearing a mask and a sweater or jacket—more proof of her making her own decisions, as her feminist declarations in recent interviews indicate.

Standout tracks include the neo-Britney "Into You," the reggae-infused "Side to Side," which features extra-spicy rapping from "big sister" Nicki Minaj; and the Martin-assisted "Touch It."

All in all, those looking for an intellectual challenge or high art will not find it on an album featuring lyrics like "Good s***," but this is not meant to be high art. It's called "pop music" due to its capability of being "popular" and enjoyed by the general "populace." In this sense, Grande has released an album that stands up against her peers, stuffed full of grooves that are fulfilling enough to shake your head and ass to at parties in the summer of 2016.

Dangerous Woman out now.

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ENMUSUBI FUURIN FESTIVAL

Japan dances to the sounds of summer winds

The idea of Japanese summers conjure memories of pulsating taiko drums, chanting crickets, and booming fireworks echoing throughout the sky. But embedded into this soundtrack is the delicate tinkling of fuurin, the Japanese brand of wind chimes.

The wind chimes, commonly made of glass and ceramic but traditionally of copper and steel, decorate the doorways and balconies of many Japanese homes in the summer, and are adorned with designs or paintings of summer imagery. While historically, fuurin were used to measure the speed and direction of winds, they now grace people's homes as summer ornaments, coming in the shapes of Mickey Mouse, Hello Kitty, and the like.



The fuurin plays a pivotal role in one of Japan's newest festivals, the Enmusubi Fuurin Festival.

Held annually at the Hikawa Shrine in the Edo-style town of Kawagoe, Saitama, the festival centers around people sending their prayers regarding love out into the universe.

They do this by writing down their wishes and dreams onto strips of wood called "tan-zaku," which are then tied to colorful Edo-style wind chimes that are gathered in an area called "Enmusubi Fuurin Kairo," which translates to "the marriage wind chimes corridor."

After visitors have expressed their heart's desires to the Milky Way, they can treat their eyes to the takemari—artistic spherical bamboo ornaments—that adorn various areas of the shrine. The objets light up at dusk,

making for a scenic stroll among the spiritual grounds.

The stroll would inevitably lead to the newly installed Fuurin Komichi ("wind chime alley"), where wind chimes line the pathways that differ in appearance from those seen at the Enmusubi Fuurin Kairo. The fuurin here are simplistic and clear, but their tinkling sounds are just as divine.

The shrine lights up in the evening at an area called "Amano Gawa no Negai Goto" ("What the Milky Way Prays for"). Here, the illuminated stream of goshinsui (water offered to the gods) runs through, emulating the Milky Way, symbolizing the union between the Vega and Altair stars that prompted the galaxy to come to Earth. The stream's steady flow also provides the soundtrack to a quiet stroll underneath the star-lit sky.

For a taste of the soothing side of Japan's festivals, let the winds take you to the Enmusubi Fuurin Festival.

Enmusubi Fuurin Festival. Jul 9-Aug 31, 9am-9pm; Amano Gawa no Negai Goto 7-9pm. 2-11-3 Miyashita-machi, Kawagoe-shi, Saitama. Kawagoe or Honkawagoe. www.hikawa-fuurin.jp/hikawa_e/



THE BOYS OF SUMO

Stepping into the stables

BY TAMATHA ROMAN



Beyond breaking the bank for a ringside seat at a sumo match, or spying on a sumo wrestler at a random train station, it may seem impossible to get up close and personal with the action. Then again, few people are aware of the option to visit one of the roughly 45 sumo *heya* (stables) in Tokyo's Ryogoku district, where the wrestlers reside. This is where they eat, sleep, and conduct *asagaiko* (morning practice), often in front of interested parties sitting close enough to see sweat fly.

Both Japanese and foreigners are encouraged to visit the heyas, requiring neither guided tours—it's free!—nor advanced language skills. However, arranging a visit comes with a bit of finagling, and it's essential to call the heya ahead of time to get permission, usually within a week of your desired visit.

Upon turning up, you are required to show respect in whatever form the heya conveys: “No talking,” “Dress appropriately and no bare feet,” “No eating or drinking” ... and, “No flash photography.” A list is dictated to you, or simply assumed by trial and error. Rules and protocol for visiting a beya are available online, but it's rare to find a personal account of the



experience—especially from a non-Japanese point of view.

Though I have seen sumo in the traditional sense, I was mostly curious to see the wrestlers in their natural environment. So, as punishment for not doing her homework, I coerced one of my Japanese students to call around on my behalf. Out of my list, only Kokonoe Beya, a stable run by a former grand champion, housing a few white belt champions, agreed to host me and my friends. “Show up between 7 to 8am on Saturday,” my student relayed. But before I could ask any questions about rules or even supply my name, the beya had hung up on her.

This was going to be interesting.

On Saturday morning, we wandered down a residential area of Ryogoku. The beya is rather disguised, located in a nondescript building with a white exterior. My friend had arrived before me, texting, “I hear skin,” referring to the sounds of wet slaps audible upon approaching the heya. I didn't know what to do. Ring the doorbell? After a few minutes, the door opened, and a short, confused man—most likely an apprentice—stepped out. I stumbled in Japanese, trying to explain that I called ahead to watch the practice. A quick nod and we were granted access, sent toward a pair of sliding doors, and given one simple rule: “no talking.”

Once more unsure of our next move, we entered into a large room. On our side there was a shiny wooden stage area, and on the other side, a dirt floor ringed with a loose rope. As we stumbled in, we immediately garnered the attention of the 10 sumo wrestlers present—mid-stretch—on the dirt side. A few smiled shyly. Most just carried on. And then we learned the other rules as we repeatedly breached unknown etiquette. Seeing cushions already available, sitting at the front of the stage, we made our way to sit. One nearby sumo wrestler grunted “no,” gesturing toward the stack of square cushions in the back. We quickly grabbed them and sat in a line off to the side. Having also neglected to close the sliding door, the same wrestler scowled and motioned for us to close it. Clearly, we were idiots.

Once our shame had settled, the actual practice was quite fun to watch. The majority of the wrestlers spent their session practicing *shiko*, stamping their feet and slapping their thighs in a squat to improve lower body strength. One wrestler performed *teppo*, pushing his hands and alternating hip and leg forward—a practice designed to help topple opponents. A good portion of the practice, however, was dedicated to the unranked wrestlers, who continuously fought a handful of other wrestlers. After each bout, the stable master—whom those front cushions were actually for—offered suggestions for improvement.

For me, the best part of this experience was immersing myself in the intimate setting and watching the personalities of various sumo emerge every once in a while. Even the scowling sumo managed to joke with a fellow wrestler at one point.

We stayed for a little over an hour, but decided to leave once our backs were aching and stomachs growling. Several wrestlers lightly bowed, and we did the same, regrouping outside in a fit of giggles.

Kokonoe Beya. 4-22 Ishiwa, Sumida-ku. Kinshicho. www.kokonoe-beya.com

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MASTERPIECES FROM THE CENTRE POMPIDOU

BY C.B. LIDDELL

When I first saw the Pompidou Centre many years ago on a visit to Paris, my first impression was that it looked like a giant piece of plumbing or the back of an old fridge. When I entered and saw the collection of 20th-century art, it was certainly not one of the most aesthetically inspiring moments of my life. But, in the context of an “overly beautiful” city like Paris, which is always in danger of crystallizing into pure cliché, it seemed to make sense as a way of keeping things edgy, gritty, and unpredictable.

Tokyo is quite a different city, obviously. It's much more modern—so much so that there's a hunger for anything pretty and decorative. This is something that also feeds into the city's artistic tastes. It is therefore interesting to see how the exhibition “Masterpieces from the Centre Pompidou” deals with these challenges.

First, the choice of venue is a good one: the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art in Ueno Park. With its surrounding trees and somewhat retro modernist architecture, the museum has a relaxed vibe that complements and offsets the strident quality that much 20th-century art has.

Another good move is that the organizers of the exhibition have eschewed an overly intellectual approach. Exhibitions of modern art



Large Red Interior, Henri Matisse, 1948

often feel a need to justify themselves by going for a big, intellectually taxing theme, often one that seeks to “reinvent the wheel” of artistic interpretation. This can often make for tedious exhibitions.

Luckily, “Masterpieces from the Pompidou” takes an unashamedly populist, free-form approach, presenting us with an eclectic selection of varied artists, one from each year for the period covered—1906 to 1977 (the year the Pompidou opened)—with no artist selected twice.

This is a sensible and entertaining approach. It's almost impossible to unify the chaos of 20th-century art, so it's best to simply embrace the diversity and make it into an erratic year-by-year odyssey.

This reliance on a timeline also allows the visitor to glean additional interest by considering the historical context of certain pieces. For example, Gilles Caron's fairly unremarkable shot of a young man throwing a stone, “Protest on Rue Saint-Jacques” (1968), gains added interest when we recognize that it is representative of 1968, a year of anarchy and riot on the streets of Paris.



The Muse - Pablo Picasso, 1935

For the most part, however, you will find yourself, like me, agreeing or disagreeing with the curators' choices, as they line up with or diverge from your own tastes. You may even occasionally wonder why a certain piece was selected.

Among the highlights for me was Roger Delauney's large colorful painting “The Eiffel Tower” (1926), respectful in its form but iconoclastic in its coloring, and Raymond Duchamp-Villon's bronze sculpture, “The Horse” (1914), with its condensed dynamic form.

Another winning point of the exhibition is that each work is accompanied by a quote from the respective artist. These are for the most part well-chosen, and sometimes even more interesting than the artworks themselves. In the case of Raymond Duchamp-Villon, the quote is, “Instead of immobilizing the mobile, mobilizing the mobile, this is sculpture's true aim.”

In a way, you could say that the Pompidou Centre has served a similar function for Paris, stopping it coagulating into the all-too-familiar and keeping it slightly chaotic and off balance.

Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art. Until Sep 22.



Bicycle Wheel, Marcel Duchamp, 1913



Nude by the Bath Tub, Pierre Bonnard, 1931



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THE YOGA MAN

Changing perceptions, one pose at a time

BY NICOLÒ GOVONI

Two cups of exhausting work, half a teaspoon of urban-induced stress, and a pinch of inevitable marital tension: this is the recipe for an emotional breakdown. The cure: yoga.

Tom Wada is an experienced yoga practitioner of 13 years, and reveals to *Metropolis* his unique experiences of teaching yoga in Tokyo, and how the practice transformed him from an unhappy salaryman to a fulfilled human being—and how it can do the same for anyone.

“I was working for a Japanese mega company when I was introduced to the world of yoga by a close friend,” says Wada. “Yoga? I thought at first. That doesn’t sound cool at all. But then he showed me some of his moves, and it was nothing like I had imagined. It was completely different.”

This is how Wada starts the story of how yoga turned his life around. A trace of excitement can be heard in his voice when, over a decade later, he speaks about “Ashtanga,” the “eight-limbed” yoga style that focuses on the fluid transition between positions.

“After the first taste, I was hooked. I started by going once a week, then twice a week, and before you know it, I was going six times a week,” Wada explains.

Thirteen years after discovering yoga, Wada quit his corporate job and now works for himself and teaches at various yoga studios, including the International Yoga Center (IYC) in Omotesando. The studio was founded by his sensei,

Ken Harakuma, one of the very few authorized teachers in the world of Ashtanga—a form of yoga that gained popularity in the early ’00s, when celebrities such as Madonna, Sting, and Gwyneth Paltrow began touting its benefits.

“There might have been other ways, but I took a different direction. Yoga gave me the courage to shape my own path, and not simply follow in the footsteps of my father and grandfather,” he states.

Wada obtained his certificate by practicing with gurus in Dharamshala, India. According to him, although practicing in India gives you a glimpse of the spiritual and cultural side of yoga, visiting the region is not a must anymore, especially with the variety of Westernized schools that have developed over the last few decades.

“The modern approach, on the contrary, emphasises the importance of being able to practice on our own, anywhere, anytime, making it a part of your daily routine—just like taking a shower, but on the inside.”

Japanese perceptions of yoga are a crucial point in Wada’s teaching style. He mentions how the 1995 Aum terrorist attack—which was perpetrated by a cult that started off as a yoga class—cast a large shadow over the way Japanese perceive yoga for over 10 years.

“Now yoga is booming, especially among women, due to the growing number of actresses and models that are practicing and, hence, spreading the health benefit of it. But

this creates yet another barrier,” Wada explains. “It’s becoming more and more difficult for guys to enter a studio, because of the highly female-centered advertisements all around the city, giving the impression of yoga as a ‘girl thing’; whereas, in fact, for hundreds of years, it was solely a male practice.”

Conceptually, Wada says the problem lies in the fact that men feel uncomfortable showing others their flexibility—especially to women. “But the crux of the matter is that, if you’re aware of the people surrounding you, you’re doing it wrong. Yoga [is based] in being so concentrated, you don’t notice anyone else in the room.”

What is the solution to this modern day gender problem in yoga?

“Many male celebrities regularly practice yoga and meditation. The only thing they need to do is ‘come out’ to the public,” Wada chuckles. “So people will change the way they perceive it and think, ‘If he does it, I can do it, too!’”

Another challenge Wada faces are perceptions that yoga is merely a stretching exercise. In reality, the practice largely consists of meditation, which leads to another challenge, as classes can become restless and impatient. “The reason this happens is that here in Japan, people associate meditation with Zen Buddhism, which involves a set of rigid rules, sometimes resulting in such an intense and rigorous concentration that wears you out instead of having a regenerating effect. So the result is that when you mention meditation to people, the reaction is: ‘Oh, that’s hard. And boring.’ But it’s not. The philosophy behind yoga is practical and truly tangible, and it teaches you how to live a happy life.”

Wada believes that if more people practiced yoga, society as a whole would benefit, a belief that led him to teach. “Because I felt it,” he says. “Because I loved it, now I want to share it with the world.”

Wada teaches Hatha yoga, and his strength lies in the fact that his approach doesn’t adhere to any one school, but takes inspiration from a variety of different styles he’s learnt over the years, and developing them into a personal and rather unique teaching style.

The class lives up to expectations. Wada accommodates students in one of the spacious and tranquil IYC rooms, with warm wooden floors and shiny green leaves appearing just beyond the wide windows. The classes comprise of diverse groups, and are a great place to meet people from all over the world with a shared passion for achieving peace of mind.

International Yoga Center, 5-47-3, Jingūmae, Omotesando. Class: Sundays, 3:10-4:25pm. 📍 Harajuku. <http://tomyoga.namaste.jp>



ASK METROPOLIS ANYTHING

Dear Metropolis,

My husband is a recovering alcoholic and has been having a hard time since we moved to Tokyo. Before coming here, he's said he still had urges but manages to hold himself back when in a situation where alcohol is present. But that situation is kind of unavoidable in Japan, where business meetings and even friendly get-togethers always happen in bars or izakaya, and not drinking makes you a social pariah of sorts. I don't know that people understand his reasons for not drinking, either.

There's an enormous pressure placed on him and he worries his social life would suffer because he's abstaining. How can I help him? What support is available?

Sober in Sasazuka

Dear Sober in Sasazuka,

There is indeed a strong drinking culture in Japanese society, and the pressure for someone who is abstaining or on the path to recovery may be massive, especially when their social life hangs on the balance.

Fortunately, there are groups that provide English-language support. While your husband may be hesitant, Alcoholics Anonymous of Japan is the first option that caters to English speakers, with meetings daily in Tokyo and regular sessions in other prefectures.

If language isn't an issue, the Tokyo Danshukai is a non-profit that offers support in Japanese through counseling and meetings nationwide, as well as information on clinics and other institutions. The Nihon Danshu Renmei also offers support group meetings around the country, and sells educational material and brochures.

Although they cater primarily to those who have been affected by a friend or family member's alcoholism, the AI-anon in Tokyo group offers an English-language 12-step program, and meets at the Franciscan Chapel Center in Roppongi on Tuesday evenings.



APOCRYPHA: Photo by Kaiti Rob

EVENTS

JUL 8: Apocrypha: In Retrospect

The art of storytelling is well and alive at Apocrypha. Inspired by story-centric podcasts such as *The Moth* and *Risk!*, this monthly event allows various individuals to share their personal life experiences with audiences in short story form. Themes vary by month; July's installment will take a nostalgic turn with "In retrospect" as its motif. **Jul 8, 7:30pm. Bar Gari Gari, B1 Tobita Bldg., 2-45-9 Daizawa, Setagaya-ku. ¥1,000 (incl. 1 drink).** 📍 Ikenoue.

JUL 15: Nerd Nite Tokyo

Describing itself as "the Discovery Channel with beer," Nerd Nite is an ongoing series held around the world, of science-related discussions and presentations, as well as drinks and entertainment. The second installment of Nerd Nite Tokyo will feature talks by Mitch Altman, inventor of TV-B-Gone and a prominent figure in the "hackerspace" movement, and Sakya Dasgupta, a computational neuroscientist and researcher at IBM Research Tokyo. **Jul 15, 7:30pm. Impact HUB, 2-11-3 Meguro, Meguro-ku. ¥2,000 (incl. 2 drinks).** 📍 Meguro.

JUL 16: Tokyo ARK Adoption Fair

If you're looking for a four-legged addition to your family, you could meet that special critter in Shakujii-koen. The Kanto- and Kansai-based non-profit animal rescue group ARK (Animal Refuge Kansai) is holding an adoption fair at Pet Spa, located near Shakujii Park, where there will be a plethora of adoptable dogs and cats eager to meet you, tails a-wagging. If you'd like to support the NPO, there will be merch on sale; proceeds go toward funding ARK's shelters and ongoing projects. English speakers onsite. **Jul 16, 1-4pm. 1-28-7 Shakujiimachi, Nerima-ku.** 📍 Shakujii-koen.

JUL 23-24: World Gourmet & Music Festa '16

Yoyogi Park becomes a haven for world-class eats and beats. Musicians and performers from various countries take to the stage and heat things up—the spotlight's on ASEAN countries, but feature cultures from other parts of the globe—and international stalls featuring top-notch international cuisine from local restaurants and chefs give a taste of Tokyo's rich culinary diversity. **Jul 23-24. Free admission. Yoyogi Park.** 📍 Harajuku or Meiji-jingumae.

For further support, TELL Japan offers anonymous telephone and in-person counseling, and the Japan Helpline offers advice and information.

RESOURCES

Alcoholics Anonymous of Japan

<http://aajapan.org>

AI-Anon in Tokyo

Meets Tue, 7pm. Franciscan Chapel Center, 4-2-37 Roppongi, Minato-ku. 📍 Roppongi. <http://ai-anontokyo.org/>

Tokyo Danshukai

10am-4pm, Mon-Sat; 1-4pm, every first Sun. Tel: 03-5624-0318. www.tokyo-danshu.or.jp

Nihon Danshu Renmei

www.dansyu-renmei.or.jp

TELL Japan

Lifeline available daily, 9am-11pm. Tel: 03-5774-0992. www.telljp.com

The Japan Helpline

Available daily, all day. Tel: 0570-000-911. www.jhelpline.com

AKAI MEDICAL CLINIC

📍 Omotesando & Yokohama



Discovering that long-sought-after beauty treatment can be as simple as picking up the phone and getting a consultation at Akai Medical Clinic. With convenient locations in Tokyo's trendy Omotesando and the vibrant Yokohama, Akai understands the needs of every patient, providing discreet, effective treatments to suit any look. The Omotesando clinic specializes in basic cosmetic surgeries, including eyelid surgery, nasal reshaping, face-lifting, breast surgeries (augmentation, lift, reduction, and reconstruction), liposuction, and skin treatments with various methods. The Yokohama clinic specializes in high-quality skincare treatments.

Run by the renowned, board-certified plastic surgeons Dr. Hidemi Akai and Dr. Keiko Akai, the Akai Medical Clinic has long been lauded by patients for its world-class standards and outstanding results. Trained at Harvard Medical School and the prestigious Massachusetts General Hospital, Dr. Hidemi Akai is currently an associate professor in the Department of Plastic Aesthetic and Reconstructive Surgery at Showa University in Tokyo. Dr. Keiko Akai is a skincare specialist and dermatologist. Employing over 10 different types of the latest machinery, the doctors at Akai provide treatments in Botox, fillers, laser, IPL, RF, Plasma, HIFU, age spots/stains/discolorations, tattoo removal, laser hair removal, and cellulite treatments.

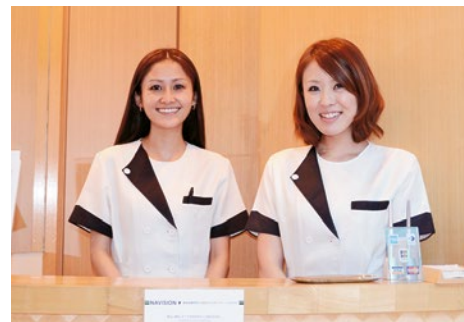
Akai also specialize in the "Vampire Lift"—using fat and stem cell injections and/or Platelet Rich Fibrin Matrix (PRFM) injections—which was designed to eliminate wrinkles and sagging, and create a natural-looking, youthful effect. Using the latest technology, the procedure harvests, processes, and/or delivers platelets from your blood and uses them as a filler, allowing for the overall quality of your skin to improve and regain its natural elasticity. Akai uses PureGraft® to prepare fat and stem cells by removing unwanted contaminants from the tissue taken, resulting in a highly purified graft—effective for high survival rates, and long-lasting results in breast augmentation and facial regeneration and rejuvenation (non-surgical face-lifting). In fact, the procedure is scientifically proven to provide more reliable results than conventional techniques, while being a quick session, operated in a safe and sterile environment.

The doctors at Akai are also on the forefront of treatments in Ultrasonic Treatment in Medical Systems (UTIMS)—the first in Japan—which is perfect for no-downtime facelifts. HIFU is a non-surgical, non-invasive treatment that uses the thermal effect—meaning heat, which rises up to between 70 to 80 degrees Celsius—to perform lifts, fatty tissue and skin tightening (with simultaneous rejuvenation), and non-invasive face-lifting.

For youthful, revitalized skin, Akai provides treatments using Vital Injector. The hassle-free process involves an injection of small amounts of beauty components—such as hyaluronic acid, amino acids, Hydrogen, vitamins, botox and "growth factors"—into the shallow part of the skin. The resulting look is nothing short of miraculous.

Lastly, getting old or having an illness can have devastating consequences on the body, and Akai are highly skilled in performing Hydrogen Drip procedures.

This process involves the use of hydrogen molecules—the smallest molecules—for prevention against the effects of aging, as well as side-effects from cancer or diabetes. This is the latest in intravenous nutrient therapy, changing bad oxidants in the body into harmless "water." The treatment is also highly effective at add-



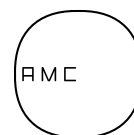
ing other antioxidant infusion therapies—such as high-concentration vitamin C, glutathione, and Myers' Cocktail—to the hydrogen infusion.

So contact the clinic today for a consultation. Their skilled, bilingual staff will have you on your way to becoming a great-looking you.

SPECIAL OFFER

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📍 Yokosuka-chuo

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🌐 <http://all-smile.com/>



ALL SMILE DENTAL CLINIC

📍 Yokosuka

All Smile Dental Clinic is a family-friendly, English-speaking clinic located right in the heart of Yokosuka City. In addition to general dental therapy and pediatric dentistry, the clinic also offers an impressive selection of aesthetic treatment options including implants, whitening, orthodontics, and "Invisalign" braces. All services

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Azabu Skin Clinic

WEBSITE



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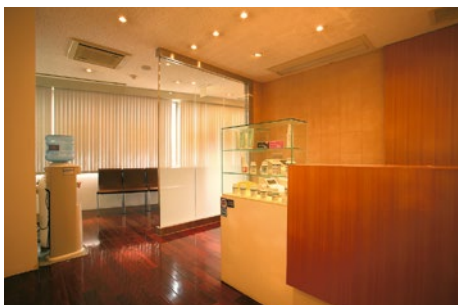
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AZABU SKIN CLINIC

📍 Ebisu

With summer in full swing, Azabu Skin Clinic has a variety of effective operation and nonoperative treatments, from eye surgery and rhinoplasty to liposuction, to get you to look your best. Vanquish ME is the latest model in the Vanquish series, and provides quick, painless, FDA-approved procedures that will bring you down

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SPECIAL OFFER

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- 📍 Roppongi
- ✉ oginuma.tsuyoshi@palette.plala.or.jp
- 🌐 www.familie-dental.jp/en/second/



MOTOAZABU FAMILIE DENTAL CLINIC

📍 Roppongi

Located in a peaceful residential corner of Roppongi, Motoazabu Familie Dental Clinic is known and trusted by the local community for offering effective, worry-free dental treatments. With regular patients, Japanese and foreigners alike, residential and local office workers, Motoazabu Familie Dental Clinic understands the needs of every individual, and provides private, consensual, and secure consultations in one of their comfortable treatment rooms. Motoazabu Familie Dental Clinic also provides a child-friendly atmosphere with toys and picture books, and their staff are able to provide services in English. At Motoazabu Familie Dental Clinic, patients enjoy the security of having options thoroughly explained to them—including treatments, costs, and the time each treatment will take—so as to ensure that each patient leaves with a smile every time.



WEBSITE



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PLAZA CLINIC

📍 Hiroo

Dr. Robert Kure, former chief resident in plastic surgery at UCLA Medical Center and head surgeon at Plaza Clinic, strives to ensure that Plaza Clinic provides the very best in modern cosmetic care. In fact, being the only American Board of Plastic Surgery-certified surgeon in Japan—with over 18 years of experience overseas—Kure is an easy choice for those considering cosmetic surgery. Plaza Clinic is located near Hiroo Crossing, and offers facelifts, liposuction, laser tattoo and freckle removal, and double eyelid procedures, using modern, state-of-the-art equipment. Additionally, Plaza offers Botox treatments for wrinkles and migraine headaches, hyperhidrosis for hands, Restylane and Juvéderm to reduce lines, and Retin-A and Obagi systems to remove blemishes and wrinkles. Consultations can be done in English, and foreign insurance is accepted for reconstructive procedures and certain dermatological cases. Once you've been to Plaza, we're confident you'll visit again!



WEBSITE



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ROPPONGI HAT CLINIC

📍 Roppongi

Opened in January 2016, Roppongi HAT Clinic provides safe and secure medical care. It is conveniently located on the second floor of the Roppongi T-Cube building, a mere three minutes' walk from Roppongi-itchome Station and easily accessible from Tameike-Sannō Station. The clinic provides primary-care medical services, referrals to medical services and specialists in Japan, flu shots and vaccinations, and health checks for schools. The clinic also specializes in heart and cardiovascular disease care, under the qualified care of its owner and operator, Dr. Tomonobu ("Tom") Fukuda. Fluent in both English and Japanese, Dr. Fukuda is a Juntendo School of Medicine graduate and has trained and worked at Juntendo Hospital's Department of Thoracic and Cardiac Surgery. Dr. Fukuda was also a practicing cardiac surgeon during a three-year fellowship in the Department of Cardiac Surgery at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He is also board-certified to practice anti-aging medicine. Roppongi HAT Clinic is dedicated to helping patients find the best medical treatment possible, to lead a healthy and comfortable life in Tokyo. Call or visit today for a consultation.



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📍 Yokohama

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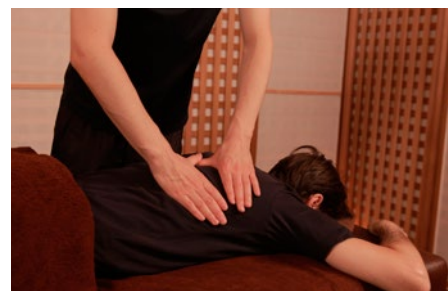
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ACUPUNCTURE & BODY CARE WABITALI

📍 Azabu-Juban

Using traditional Japanese therapy cultivated through centuries of practice, Wabitali unearths your body's hidden beauty through acupuncture, *kanpo*, and hand techniques. The original acupuncture method improves upon your body's natural composition, making you feel a perfect as you will look. Rather than cosmetic surgery, Wabitali focuses on drawing out the body's natural healing abilities, improving everything from skin and organs to the effects of aging and overall wellbeing. Honda Ichiro is an English-speaking personal trainer and acupuncturist with a wealth of experience working all over the world with well-known artists and models. Osada Nana, also proficient in English, specializes in Beauty Acupuncture—the so-called “ultimate beauty treatment”—that is popular among Hollywood celebrities. Together, Ichiro and Nana opened their Azabu-Juban clinic to provide a safe, relaxing, and English-speaking environment where foreign residents can feel comfortable. So make an appointment today and unearth your true inner beauty.



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🌐 www.yamate-d.com/english/EnglishGuide.html



YAMATE DENTAL CLINIC

📍 Nakameguro

There's no need to worry anymore about dental treatment in Japan! Yamate Dental Clinic has highly-skilled dentists who offer quality treatment using the best materials and machines available. Their general treatments offer nearly-painless laser treatments for cavities and periodontal diseases. Also on offer are aesthetic treatments to improve color and alignment; orthodontic treatments, performed by an orthodontist-certified physician who has vast experience handling various cases; implant treatments; child dentistry, to treat and prevent cavities in children—a process that should start from infancy; and dentures—of which Yamate's subtle dentures have received rave reviews. Their website is available in English; look for the language switcher in the top right corner. They also accept Tricare insurance. Reservations accepted via e-mail or phone.





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SETOUCHI SHIMANAMI KAIDO

70 kilometers of two-wheeled fun and adventure

BY JOAN BAILEY

The sky glowed pink when we got off the train in Onomichi, Hiroshima, and unpacked our bicycles. My husband Richard and I stopped for maps and boarded a small ferry, accompanied by a few high school students and a lone salaryman. Ten minutes later, we landed in Mukaishima, our first stop on the Setouchi Shimanami Kaido.

Completed in 1999, the Shimanami Kaido is a 70-kilometer cycling route. It strings together six small, secluded beach islands, and soars over Japan's Inland Sea on some of the world's longest suspension bridges to culminate in Imabari, Ehime. Bilingual maps offer information about hills, sites, and ferries. Bike rental is also available, starting at ¥1,000 per day. Onsen, cafés, campgrounds, and bicycle-friendly hotels line the route along with temples, museums, and the occasional castle ruin.

"The guy said to follow the blue line," Richard muttered as we looked around. Sure enough, we spotted the sky blue that marked our way, and were soon en route to our first campsite.

The next morning, it took us to the first bridge. Innoshimabashi is a 1,270-meter-long



suspension bridge where riders marvel at the islands dotting the channel below before arriving at Innoshima. There, we stopped at Umay, a funky little restaurant, for spicy wild boar curry. Next door at one of the many michi-no-eki (roadside stops), we sampled citrus fruits from nearby orchards.

From there, we pedaled past the Innoshima Flower Center and fields guarded by well-dressed scarecrows to Ikuchibashi, the 790-meter-long bridge to Ikuchijima. We paused at Dolce for rest and gelato made exclusively from local fruit. Before camping at Sunset Beach, we visited Kosanji Temple, famed for its white marble garden, and the Ikuro Hirayama Museum. An artist and activist, Hirayama was an atomic bomb survivor famed for his Silk Road and desert landscape paintings.

Tatarabashi Bridge carried us to Oomishima and Ooyamazumi Jinja. Founded in 594 AD, it's one of the oldest shrines in western Japan. "We came here to pray when I was a child," said Naoki, a fellow camper, and part of a long history of worshippers that included

warriors, fishermen, and sailors. The shrine, with its nearly 3,000-year-old camphor tree and 14th-century architecture, is also home to Japan's largest samurai armor collection.

"I am really impressed with the hospitality for cyclists here," said Tomo, who told us this was his third year in a row here. Undoubtedly, it's the people that make this ride unique. We heard more than one "Gambatte!" as we rolled past fields and orchards or wound through villages. On

busy weekends and holidays, volunteer Trail Angels descend with water, homemade lemonade, and slices of cold fruit.

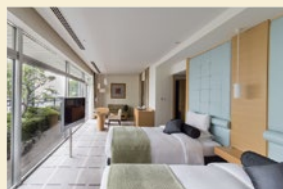
"I can see why Tomo comes back," said Richard when we stopped on Kurashima-Kaikyobashi, the over-four-kilometer-long bridge to Imabari. I nodded, mesmerized by the swirling water below that once defied pirates and impresses tourists today. This ride might be done, but we'll be back.





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Broadway Dance Center, a 30-year veteran in training professional dancers, held the grand opening of BDC Pilates in Omotesando/Minami-Aoyama in late April. It is the first studio in Japan to focus on group reformer classes, and with a limit of six people per class, participants receive the full attention of the instructor. English-speaking instructors available. Private sessions also offered. For a limited time, BDC is waiving its ¥30,000 membership fee. Trial lesson ¥2,000. Located a 30-second walk from Omotesando Station. 5F, 5-6-24 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo. E-mail: info@bdcpilates.com. (English OK.) <http://bdcpilates.com> Omotesando



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On July 23 and 24, people from all regions of Japan who love arts and crafts will gather together at Tokyo Big Sight for one of the largest handicraft festivals in Japan. Up to 5,500 craftspeople will sell unique, handmade items (fashion accessories, art, zakka, ceramics, furniture, etc). Finding one-of-a-kind items and getting to talk with the artists and craftspeople is a special opportunity you shouldn't miss. There will also be more than 50 themed workshops, including Japanese crafts like dyeing *tenuigi*, painting *daruma*, and making *kimekomi* dolls. Tickets available online: <http://yahoo.jp/gr3ct5>



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Finding the right hair salon can be tough. You want someone who understands your non-Japanese hair, an atmosphere that's relaxing and unique, and a place that's open when you need it to be. Nora Hair Salon hits all the right notes with its spacious and fashionable high-sense space in Minami-Aoyama.

You can even bring your children along—no need to line up a sitter—and they might even spot one of the many celebrities who frequent the salon. **From-1st BF, 5-3-10 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku. Mon-Fri, 12am-10pm; Sat, 11am-8pm; Sun, 11am-7pm. Tel: 03-6419-9933. http://kei8330.wix.com/norahairsalon** ☎ Omotesando



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UNION SQUARE NEW YORK

Welcome to Union Square, a new hair salon run by Mika. Mika spent 15 years as a creative hair stylist at a trendy salon in the East Village in NYC. One of her specialties is the "ultra natural straight" treatment—covered by the New York Times—which straightens without irons. Until the end of July, get an Ultra Natural Straightening for 20% off the regular price, with free Head Spa Deep-Conditioning Treatment included (¥4,500-). Regular price for Ultra Natural Straightening is ¥16,000-20,000 plus tax. Men's cut ¥6,500. Women's ¥7,000. Children's ¥3,500-4,500 (under 12). Mika is happy to offer a free deep-conditioning treatment or scalp massage to first-time clients. **201 Kitamura 60, 5-16-1 Hiroo, Shibuya-ku. Tel: 03-6721-9980. Tue-Sat 11am-8pm, Sun 11am-6pm. http://unionsq-ny.tokyo** ☎ Hiroo.



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DAILY CONTRASTS

BY ILYA MILSTEIN



HOROSCOPE

BY CATHRYN MOE

♥ Love ♣ Money ♠ Luck

ARIES
Mar 21-Apr 20 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

You may find July a smoother month, enjoying an ease as it glides by. The first few weeks turn the spotlight on your home. Secret dreams and wishes rise to the surface, as do those who recognize your potential and support your hopes. Look for the last week to be less at a distance and more upfront. Your charisma is amped up, your energy is heightened, and a winning streak sets in.

LEO
Jul 24-Aug 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

There can be major moves for you within the month of July. Do not expect the way it begins to hold you to how it unfolds. Initially, you may have money on your mind, but an uncertainty still prevails. Then Venus moves into Leo, and Mercury follows two days later. You may actually be able to feel a difference. It's likely the person you're trying to impress is trying to impress you.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov 23-Dec 22 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

In July, Sagittarians face a fun challenge. Thank goodness that it's easier to handle than those of previous months. Your strength is in garnering your feelings the first two weeks. Instead of projecting the pros and cons of your choices, act in the moment; the honesty may surprise those close to you. Then Venus and Mercury move to your sector of travel, and the law—in your favor!

TAURUS
Apr 21-May 21 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

Career is a focal point the first and fourth weeks of July; otherwise, you're pretty much off the hook. For the Taurus who trusts their own wheel of fortune, a slowdown may be a relief. For those of you who are about to get something started, the stars shine in your corner. A grand astro trine involves some reliable pinch-hitters. They bring you luck, even when you're just in it for fun!

VIRGO
Aug 24-Sep 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

If the scent is only vaguely familiar and it turns out to be flowers, you've been out of nature for too long. If your schedule has you wrapped up tighter than a mummy, you know it's time to get away. Joy has a way of expanding when it's appreciated, and shrinking when you watch the clock. Summer was created for a reason. Mercury, Venus, and the Sun make fun an acceptable excuse!

CAPRICORN
Dec 23-Jan 20 ♥♥ ♣♣♣

If you've felt adrift, the horizon is now well within your sights. The first two weeks of July support what you've been feeling, which helps your mind to rest. Then Venus and Mercury transit to your sector of exalted attraction. This is a placement which brings money for your use from other sources. It's considered a type of inheritance for what you have contributed thus far.

GEMINI
May 22-Jun 21 ♥♥ ♣♣♣

This is your month to let yourself soar. In the beginning, it may seem like all the water signs are having it easy, while as an air sign, you're up against the wall. In truth, it's just a hop, skip, and a jump until the aspects of the planets move into position for you. By the fourth week, you're on a roll. The Sun in your solar third house helps you hit a home run, whatever game you're playing.

LIBRA
Sep 24-Oct 23 ♥♥ ♣♣♣

Are there times when you just can't focus, because something else is calling? It might be best to let summer energies carry the game in July. You're a good listener and there for others, a plus as Venus transits to your sector of group activities. If others insist you join in, you may as well enjoy it. Mercury meets up with Venus late in the second week, so your news may be a pleasure.

AQUARIUS
Jan 21-Feb 19 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

While you may question how to get out of your current trajectory, or at least stay on top of it, the pressure is primarily focused during the first two weeks of July. After all, it is summer, and you are allowed to laugh at the twists and turns that your life attracts. Then Venus and Mercury enter your partnership sector. You can let someone else call the shots, or at least listen and nod.

CANCER
Jun 22-Jul 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

True to form, you're on a roll in July. The Sun continues to light up the sky in Cancer for the first three weeks. This brings energy through your entire Happy Birthday Zone. There's also a grand trine involving Cancer—think, "life made easier and doors opening, practically on their own." Both Mercury and Venus transit to your money house. Negotiate and close those deals!

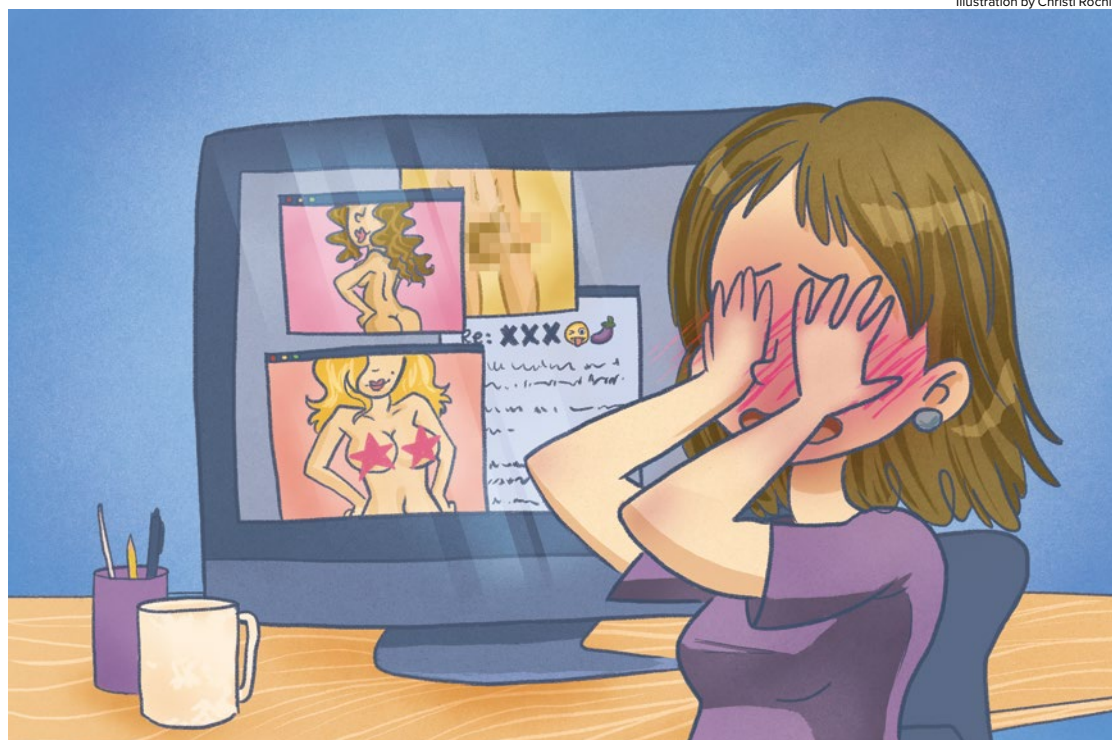
SCORPIO
Oct 24-Nov 22 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

Scorpios are born for power. You can feel your goals. Then life throws a few curves, and you wonder if they're floating further away. If you're concerned that what's close to your heart is moving out of reach, use the first two weeks of July to steady your foundation. This time can be a building block as Venus and Mercury transit mid-month to your sector of exalted attraction.

PISCES
Feb 20-Mar 20 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

Want recognition, but feeling a bit shy? Pisces has a way of flowing with external events. When they match your inner seas, you're at your most comfortable. Changing tides are part of your makeup. Others marvel at your ability to be fluid, though you need quiet time for reflection, too. Mid-July, Venus and Mercury transit to your work sector. It's a busy, important month for you!

Illustration by Christi Rochin



across an ad that I couldn't not share. (Minus any personal details, of course. Part of the job is discretion.)

It also taught me quite a bit of new vocabulary. Sometimes, it was wonderful vocabulary. A "munch," for example, is a gathering of people interested in kink. And then there was other, less wonderful vocabulary. "Earmuffs," it turns out, has more than just the standard meaning of cushioned fabric to keep your ears warm. I did a lot of Googling while in charge of the free classifieds, and it would probably be a good idea to clear my browser history. Woe betide my reputation should my computer ever be confiscated.

Some days were hard. There are cheaters out there. And liars. And people who encourage self-harm in their partners. There are scammers and spammers and trolls, and it's not always easy to tell a legitimate classifieds user from

the riffraff. And I made mistakes, and was called out for them, sometimes angrily. People don't hold back when they type fairly anonymous e-mails. A thick skin, for sure.

Luckily, there are also wonderful people in the *Metropolis* community who post ads. People who are sweet, and kind, and funny. And it only took one hilarious ad to cancel out all the bad ones, like the one that was accompanied by a cat's drivers' licence. I can't remember if the licence was blue or gold, but the cat was definitely black and white, and it was smiling. The best part was that a cat had absolutely nothing to do with the ad itself, which, if I recall correctly, was about a fellow with superior hip- and nipple-sucking powers.

My supervisor, at the end of that first week of work, scanned the finished Classifieds copy for misses and let out a burst of laughter. "Helen, I can't believe you let these go!" It wasn't a reproach, but more of an outburst of appreciation that I wasn't watering down—or rather, prudifying—the famous Met Classifieds. For the last six years, I've worked hard to maintain that tricky balance between hilariously shocking and inappropriate. I know I've not always gotten it right, but it's been great fun trying.

■ Helen A. Langford is a freelance writer and innkeeper based in Kamakura.

THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD

A former classifieds editor says goodbye to her kinky, sometimes sleazy baby

BY HELEN LANGFORD



"You'll need a thick skin to do this work, Helen," warned my supervisor on my first day as editor of the *Metropolis* Classifieds. He was right. One of those memory-erasing neuralizers that the Men in Black have would've been a useful tool, too. So many photos of genitals, both at rest and ... erm, not so much.

I'm not sure anyone I know could have imagined me in such a position. I'm a known prude, the Charlotte of my high school friends—and my university friends. The girl who at first didn't get the "Charlotte" reference because she was too much of a prude to watch *Sex and the City*.

I was aware of the legacy with which I had been entrusted. What long-term

English-language expat or immigrant in Tokyo doesn't have a chuckle recalling their favorite personals ad, after all? But I soldiered on, grew the extra skin I needed, and became adept at averting my eyes while manoeuvring the mouse to the "x" whenever some overzealous user attached a photo of his manhood. And yes, 99.9 percent of the time, it's a man sending a photo of his bits and pieces. In fact, the only instance I can remember where it was a woman involved a U.S.-based escort who sent my commercial classifieds colleague over a dozen photos of herself in various stages of undress, asking us to cover up any inappropriate parts with star stickers.

Despite the rather unusual workplace hazards—perhaps slightly because of them—it was a great job, one that inspired a wistful envy in friends and acquaintances whenever I came



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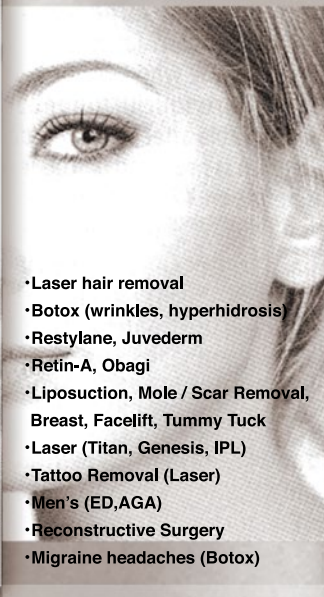
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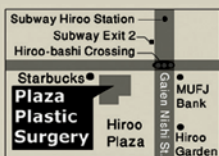


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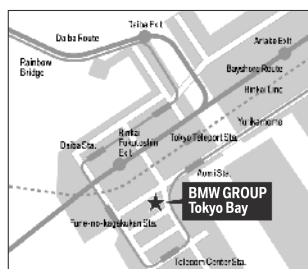
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